

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. An anti-stratification-delivery system comprising:
2 a multi-zone-refrigeration unit having at least first and second zone
3 temperature controllers, the first and second zone temperature controllers are capable of
4 being set at different temperatures to establish a temperature gradient in a liquid, the
5 temperature gradient being sufficient to cause natural thermal convection within the
6 liquid to stir a colloid suspended in the liquid to an approximately uniform colloidal
7 suspension; and
8 a delivery system configured to dispense the approximately uniform
9 colloidal suspension.
- 1 2. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 multi-zone-refrigeration unit forms a bottle cavity; and the anti-stratification delivery
3 system further comprises a bottle disposed in the bottle cavity, the bottle configured to
4 contain the liquid and the colloid.
- 1 3. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further
2 comprising a thermal insulator disposed around a portion of the multi-zone-
3 refrigeration unit, the thermal insulator configured to insulate the multi-zone-
4 refrigeration unit from an outside atmosphere.
- 1 4. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further
2 comprising a thermal insulator disposed between the first and second zone temperature
3 controllers.
- 1 5. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 first and second zone temperature controllers are respective first and second zone
3 coolers.
- 1 6. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 first zone temperature controller is a zone heater and the second zone temperature
3 controller is a zone cooler.
- 1 7. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 further
2 comprising:

3 a thermally conductive sleeve disposed in the bottle cavity, the thermally
4 conductive sleeve configured to be removable from the bottle cavity;
5 wherein the bottle is disposed in the thermally conductive sleeve.

1 8. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 7 wherein the
2 thermally conductive sleeve includes a plurality of thermally conductive portions and a
3 set of thermal insulators disposed between the thermally conductive portions.

1 9. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 delivery system includes
3 a draw tube configured to dispense the approximately uniform
4 colloidal suspension, the draw tube having a portion disposed into the bottle and
5 a portion extending from the bottle, and
6 a thermal insulator disposed around the portion of the draw tube
7 extending from the bottle.

1 10. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:
2 the first zone temperature controller includes a first housing having a
3 first set of channels, the first set of channels being configured to carry a first coolant
4 having a first temperature; and
5 the second zone temperature controller includes a second housing
6 having a second set of channels, the second set of channels being configured to carry a
7 second coolant having a second temperature.

1 11. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 10 wherein the
2 first and second housings are aluminum.

1 12. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 10 wherein the
2 first and second zone temperatures are independently controllable.

1 13. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:
2 the first and second zone temperature controllers are disposed
3 horizontally adjacent; and
4 the temperature gradient is established horizontally across the liquid.

1 14. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein:

2 the first and second zone temperature controllers are disposed vertically
3 adjacent; and
4 the temperature gradient is established vertically within the liquid.

1 15. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 multi-zone refrigeration unit has more than first and second zone temperature
3 controllers configured to establish the temperature gradient.

1 16. The anti-stratification delivery system of claim 1 wherein the
2 colloid and liquid form a low-k spin-on-dielectric precursor.

1 17. A method of dispensing a colloid in liquid, the method
2 comprising:
3 establishing a temperature gradient in the liquid and the colloid;
4 mixing the liquid and the colloid by natural thermal convention to an
5 approximately uniform colloidal suspension; and
6 dispensing through a dispensing system the approximately uniform
7 colloidal suspension.

1 18. The method of claim 17 further comprising setting a maximum
2 temperature of the temperature gradient below an upper colloid-chemical-breakdown
3 temperature.

1 19. The method of claim 17 wherein the liquid and colloid form a
2 low-k spin-on-dielectric precursor.

1 20. An apparatus for storing, mixing, and dispensing a liquid
2 solution for a semiconductor processing tool, the apparatus comprising:
3 a housing comprising a thermally conductive material, the housing
4 having at least first and second sections that combine to form a cavity, the first and
5 second section being configured to be set at different temperatures;
6 a thermal insulator comprising a low thermal conductive material, the
7 thermal insulator separating the first and second section of the housing;
8 a lid attached to the housing that is removable to allow insertion and
9 removal of a bottle from the cavity, the lid comprising an opening to allow for the
10 insertion of a draw tube into a bottle; and

11 an insulating casing that at least partially surrounds the housing.

1 21. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a bottle suitable for
2 containing the liquid solution.

1 22. The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the bottle is positioned within
2 the cavity, a first portion of the bottle is in thermal contact with an interior surface of
3 the first section of the housing and a second portion of the bottle is in thermal contact
4 with an interior surface of the second section of the housing.

1 23. The apparatus of claim 21 further comprising a thermal insert
2 forming another cavity, the thermal insert being positioned within the cavity of the
3 housing, a first portion of the thermal insert is in thermal contact with an interior
4 surface of the first section of the housing and a second portion of the thermal insert is in
5 thermal contact with an interior surface of the second section of the housing, wherein
6 the bottle is positioned within the cavity of the thermal insert.

1 24. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the first section of the
2 housing comprises a first fluid passage that allows a temperature controlled fluid to be
3 circulated throughout the first section and the second section of the housing comprises
4 a second fluid passage that allows a temperature controlled fluid to be circulated
5 throughout the second section, wherein the second fluid passage is fluidically isolated
6 from the first fluid passage.

1 25. The apparatus of claim 20 further comprising a heater coupled to
2 one of the first or second section of the housing and wherein the first and second
3 section of the housing comprise a fluid passage that allows a temperature controlled
4 fluid to be circulated throughout the first and second sections of the housing.

1 26. The apparatus of claim 20 wherein the housing comprises a
2 cylindrical sidewall and a bottom.

1 27. The apparatus of claims 26 wherein the thermal insulator divides
2 the housing sidewall into upper and lower vertically oriented portions with respect to
3 the cavity, and wherein the first section of the housing comprises a bottom portion and

4 the lower portion of the sidewall and the second section of the housing comprises the
5 upper portion of the sidewall.

1 28. The apparatus of claim 26 wherein the thermal insulator divides
2 the housing sidewall and housing bottom into left and right horizontally oriented
3 portions with respect to the cavity and wherein the first section of the housing
4 comprises the left portion of the sidewall and bottom, and the second section of the
5 housing comprises the right portion of the sidewall and bottom.

1 29. A method for forming an integrated circuit comprising:
2 mixing a spin-on-dielectric (SOD) formulation by natural thermal
3 convection including
4 exposing a first portion of the SOD formulation to a first
5 temperature, and
6 exposing a second portion of the SOD formulation to a second
7 temperature, the difference between the first and second temperatures is
8 sufficient to mix the SOD formulation to an approximately uniform colloidal
9 suspension;
10 dispensing the SOD formulation onto a substrate; and
11 forming a low-k dielectric layer from the SOD formulation.

1 30. The method of claim 29 wherein the forming step includes
2 curing the SOD formulation to form the low-k dielectric layer.

1 31. The method of claim 30 wherein the low-k dielectric layer has a
2 dielectric constant below about 3.0.

1 32. The method of claim 30 wherein the low-k dielectric layer has a
2 dielectric constant below about 2.0.